

E U L O G Y

UPON THE

CHARACTER AND SERVICES

OF

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

Late President of the United States.

DELIVERED BY INVITATION OF THE AUTHORITIES OF THE
CITY OF TAUNTON,

On the Occasion of the National Fast,

JUNE 1, 1865.

By SAMUEL L. CROCKER, JR.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY JOHN WILSON AND SON.

1865.

CITY OF TAUNTON.

BOARD OF ALDERMEN, June 7, 1865.

Resolved, That the thanks of the City Council be tendered to SAMUEL L. CROCKER, Jr., Esq., for his truthful and eloquent Address, upon the character of Abraham Lincoln, delivered on the National Fast Day.

Sent down for concurrence.

J. M. CUSHMAN, *City Clerk*.

COMMON COUNCIL, June 7, 1865.

Concurred in.

B. A. GALLIGAN, *Clerk*.

IN COMMON COUNCIL.

Ordered, That SAMUEL L. CROCKER, Jr., Esq., of Boston, be requested to furnish a copy of his Address, delivered before the City Government on the occasion of the late National Fast, for publication.

Sent up for concurrence.

B. A. GALLIGAN, *Clerk*.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN.

Concurred in.

J. M. CUSHMAN, *Clerk*.

E U L O G Y.

By solemn appointment of the President, and by common consent of the people, wherever in our country its flag is respected, this day will be observed, in commemorating the nation's bereavement at the loss of its beloved chief-magistrate, "in contemplation of his virtues and in sorrow for his sudden and violent end."

If it were merely to give formal and fitting expression to the universal grief occasioned by his death, or to signify our abhorrence of the dastardly crime that deprived us of his life, sufficient, and more than sufficient, had already been done. Every mark of respect that imagination could devise, or pomp and ceremonial exhibit, had been paid to his memory; while in every language and from every tongue have been heard the utterances of indignant execration at this monstrous and unprovoked assassination.

The sad tidings of his death filled the land with consternation and gloom. The customary pursuits of business and of pleasure were spontaneously laid aside. The bright symbols of the nation's joy at its recent

deliverance from the hands of its enemies gave place to the sadder symbols of the nation's grief. In the emphatic language of the call that brings us here to-day, "our country had become one great house of mourning."

Scarcely had the honored remains of our lamented President reached their final resting-place, whither they had been followed by thousands and tens of thousands of his countrymen, amid the lamentations and benedictions of a whole nation in affliction, ere the echoes of our grief came back to us from across the waters, accompanied with grateful expressions of sympathy for our bereavement, and more grateful attestations of respect for his memory. "Nothing like it," says the "London Times," "has been witnessed in our generation. His death has stirred the feelings of the public to their uttermost depths;" while the "Spectator" likens the impression produced to that of "a sudden private grief."

If these varied tributes of veneration and respect, which, at home and abroad, have been paid to his memory, were in reality undeserved; if they were the extravagant, though not unnatural, manifestations of a grief occasioned by the tragic circumstances of his death; if, under the impulse of a mere sympathetic excitement, we had accorded to him a character which he did not in reality possess; if his private life and public career will exhibit little that is worthy of our admiration and regard,—then would this day, so solemnly set apart for the "contemplation of his virtues," be more "honored in the breach than in the observance."

But if this spontaneous tribute of affection and respect, which has followed the announcement of his death wherever it has been proclaimed, is justly his due; if a careful scrutiny of his life and character will disclose nothing inconsistent with a Christian patriot and an upright man; if he administered the great office which he held during the most critical period in the history of the country, faithfully and well,—then may we fitly unite, under the sanctions of our holy religion, as we are invited this day to do, “in contemplating the virtues of the good man who has been removed, and in the expression of sorrow at his sudden and violent end.”

In a farewell address to his fellow-townsmen of Springfield, Illinois, made by Mr. Lincoln on the day of his departure for the seat of government, after a touching allusion to the sadness he experienced in leaving that home where he had lived for a quarter of a century, where his children were born, and where one of them lies buried, he remarks, —

“I know not how soon I shall see you again. A duty devolves upon me which is, perhaps, greater than that which has devolved upon any other man since the days of Washington. He never would have succeeded except for the aid of Divine Providence, upon which he at all times relied. I feel that I cannot succeed without the same Divine aid which sustained him, and on the same Almighty Being I place my reliance for support; and I hope you, my friends, will all pray that I may receive that Divine assistance, without which I cannot succeed, but with which success is certain.”

And when, after four years of arduous labors and harassing cares, success had crowned his efforts, in the hour of national exultation and joy, he reminded those who had assembled to tender him their congratulations, of their obligations to Him the great giver of all victory; and informed them that "a call for National Thanksgiving was then being prepared, which would soon be promulgated." Thus, in the very first public utterance that fell from his lips, as he went forth to assume the weighty responsibilities of his great office, and in this, the very last speech he ever addressed to his countrymen, as well as in all the varied measures he adopted, and which are destined, as we fondly hope, to accomplish so much for the amelioration of mankind, and for the safety, honor, and welfare of the country, we uniformly find, that faith in God and reliance upon his Providence was the mainspring of his action.

In contemplating this day the many virtues of our lamented President, let us not fail to give due prominence to this, the first and foremost of them all.

That Divine aid for which he so affectingly besought the prayers of his fellow-townsmen, on leaving that home to which he was never permitted to return alive, "without which he felt that he could not succeed, but with which success was certain," and which we cannot doubt was largely vouchsafed him, he did not expect to receive by any miraculous interposition. It was only by the faithful employment of all the means placed at his disposal, by the deliberate and judicious exercise of the faculties with which he was endowed, and by regulating his policy in accordance with moral law and

the precepts of Christianity, that he ventured to trust that success would crown his efforts. He felt that it was presumptuous and dangerous for any man rashly to assume to interpret God's will. "I am approached," he replied to a delegation who were urging for his immediate action certain measures which he deemed deserving of the most deliberate consideration, — "I am approached with the most opposite opinions and advice, and by religious men who are equally certain that they represent the Divine Will. It is my earnest desire to know and to do the will of Providence in this matter. I am not, however, to expect a direct revelation. I must study the plain, physical facts in the case, ascertain what is possible, and learn what appears to be wise and right."

Next to faith in Divine Providence, Mr. Lincoln's reliance for success was in the integrity and capacity of the American people. He believed that their patriotism and intelligence were sufficient to bear them successfully through all the dangers and trials to which they might be exposed. He leaned confidently upon them for support. No man better appreciated than he, that our Government was instituted for their benefit; and no man was ever more successful than he in interpreting their will. He felt, that, in a period of unexampled political embarrassments, where no precedents were presented for his guidance, that the deliberate judgment and sober common sense of the people would sustain all measures that the exigencies of the Government might render necessary or expedient; and in this he was never disappointed.

He believed it to be the determination of the people, that the Union should be preserved; and that, as incident thereto, all necessary power should be used for the accomplishment of this end. While many were leisurely indulging in speculations on the strict constitutionality of this measure or of that, and were strenuously insisting upon precedents in a crisis of the nation's life in itself entirely unprecedented, Mr. Lincoln unhesitatingly acted upon a view of his constitutional rights, and duties sufficiently broad and practical to meet the existing exigencies of the Government. But, in all these emergencies, he endeavored, most studiously and earnestly, to ascertain the will of the people; and most wisely and judiciously did he carry it into effect. No surgeon ever watched with deeper solicitude the pulse of his patient, than Mr. Lincoln the throbbings and pulsations of the popular heart.

It was this feeling of mutual dependence and reliance between the people and their chief magistrate, which bore the nation successfully through the dangers and trials to which it was so often exposed. The President believed in the people, and rested upon them as his support; and the people had confidence in the President, and looked trustingly to him for guidance.

To this thorough appreciation of our republican form of government, which he so admirably defined in his speech at Gettysburg as a "Government of the people by the people, for the people," was added a profound and unqualified faith in the principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence. He lived at a time when these principles were beginning to be lost sight of,—

when attempts to explain away their meaning, and lessen their value, were frequently made. It was openly contended by the advocates of slavery, that the great truths therein proclaimed were applicable only to men of a particular color, and belonging to a particular race. Others, among whom was a distinguished citizen of our own State, regarded this immortal declaration of principles and of rights as a mere "revolutionary manifesto," and its calm enunciations of fundamental truths as "sounding and glittering generalities;" while, in the senate-chamber of the nation, it had been denounced as "a self-evident lie."

Mr. Lincoln, in a masterly manner, exposed the sophistry of the reasoning by which the social and political inequalities among men were urged as a standing contradiction to the assertion "that all men are created equal," and refuted with remarkable clearness the assumption, that the principles of the Declaration were to be limited to the circumstances of the particular struggle in whose defence they were proclaimed.

"I think our fathers in that notable instrument," he says, "intended to include all men; but they did not intend to declare all men equal *in all respects*. They did not mean to say all were equal in color, size, or intellect, moral development or social capacity. They defined with tolerable distinctness in what respect they did consider all men created equal, — 'equal in respect to certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' This they said, and this they meant. They did not mean to assert the

obvious untruth, that all were then actually enjoying that equality, nor yet that they were about to confer it immediately upon them. In fact, they had no power to confer such a boon. They meant simply to declare the right, so that the enforcement of it might follow as soon as circumstances should permit. They meant to set up a standard maxim for free men, which should be familiar to all, and revered by all, constantly looked to, and constantly labored for, and, even though never perfectly attained, constantly approximated towards; and thereby constantly spreading and deepening its influence, and augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people, of all colors, everywhere." Mr. Lincoln's devotion to this great principle, as thus understood and interpreted, was not with him a mere sentiment, but a firm and deeply rooted principle of action. His conviction of its truth and practical importance was as profound as his very nature. He kept it constantly in view; and, in his public career, his policy was guided and controlled by it.

In a few sentences, uttered in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, just prior to his inauguration, and which, in view of what has since transpired, we recall with peculiar interest, he reiterates in the following emphatic language his devotion to this principle:—

"I have often inquired of myself what great principle or idea it was that kept this confederacy so long together. It was not the mere matter of the separation of the colonies from the mother-land, but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but, as I hope, to the world, for all future time. It was that which

gave promise, that in due time the weight would be lifted from the shoulders of men. Now, my friends, can this country be saved upon that basis? If it can, I shall consider myself one of the happiest of men if I can help to save it. If it cannot be saved upon that principle, it will be truly awful. But, if this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle," he continues, as if under a momentary premonition of the destiny that awaited him, "I was about to say, *I would rather be assassinated on the spot than surrender it.* I have said nothing," he adds, "that I am not willing to live by, and, if it be the pleasure of Almighty God, to die by."

Let us thank God that he lived to behold the country saved through his instrumentality, and saved by the perfect fulfilment of that principle of universal liberty announced at its birth; that with his assassination perished forever the last lingering hope of a system, in view of which the immortal framer of the Declaration of Independence "trembled for his country, when he remembered that God was just;" — whose demoniac spirit, in its mad attempt to build up an empire of which eternal servitude should constitute "the chief cornerstone," plunged the country into all the horrors of civil war, starved by inches the defenceless prisoners that fell into its hands, deliberately plotted the burning of peaceful cities and the spreading of the noisome pestilence that "walketh in darkness and destroyeth in the noonday," and, having failed in its parricidal attempt at the life of the nation, directed the shot of the assassin at its revered and honored head.

Mr. Lincoln's faith in republican government, and devotion to the principles of the declaration of our independence, naturally placed him in the position he ever occupied, of uncompromising opposition to the extension of slavery. His natural conservatism of character, and his unwavering allegiance to the Constitution and laws of the country, prevented this opposition from ever assuming even an apparent attitude of hostility to the General Government. While no one entertained a more profound conviction of the evils of slavery, or a more earnest desire that all men everywhere might be free, he measured with conscientious fidelity the extent of his authority, and the limits of his responsibility. In speech and action, he invariably recognized the paramount obligation of unqualified allegiance to the Constitution of the United States. His oath in its support, as he himself assures us, was taken "with no mental reservations, and with no purpose to construe it by any hypercritical rules."

Prior to his nomination for the Presidency, his views had led him to act in concert with the great Whig party of the nation, so long as it had an existence; and he more than once took pride in describing himself as a Henry-Clay Whig. He belonged to what was known as the conservative antislavery wing of that party. He held that Congress had no right, that the General Government had no right, to interfere with slavery in the States,—that it was purely a local institution, to be regulated and controlled exclusively by the several States where it existed. He believed that a law for the return of fugitives from service, however repugnant it might

be to the prevailing sentiment in the Free States, was within the spirit of the Constitution, and should be willingly acquiesced in by all loyal citizens. Holding these views of his duty under the Constitution, during his brief congressional career and in his numerous public addresses to his fellow-citizens, he never acted or spoke otherwise than in entire consistency with them. Thus far, and no farther, could he go. He held with Mr. Webster and other prominent statesmen of his party, that Congress, having exclusive jurisdiction over the common territories of the Union, and the spread of slavery being prejudicial to the welfare of the country, and in itself a moral, social, and political evil, it was under every obligation to prohibit its extension. He uniformly gave expression to his views in language of singular moderation, and indicating that his advocacy of them was the result of sincere convictions of duty, and not of hostility to that section of the country where opposite views were entertained. During a heated political campaign, we find him indulging in the following language of counsel to his political associates:—

“It is exceedingly desirable, that all parts of this great country shall be at peace and in harmony, one with another. Let us Republicans do our part to have it so. Even though much provoked, let us do nothing through passion or ill-temper. Even though the Southern people will not so much as listen to us, let us calmly consider their demands, and yield to them, if, in our deliberate view of duty, we possibly can.”

Mr. Lincoln was among the first to discern, in the rapid aggressions and extravagant demands of the slave

power attendant upon the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, the danger that was threatening our free institutions. He believed that that danger could only be averted by a determined resistance, on the part of the people of the Free States, to the further extension of slavery. He saw that all compromises had failed; that the issue whether slavery should be circumscribed within the limits of the States where it already existed, and thus placed in the way of ultimate extinction, or should be suffered to spread itself under the protection of the National Government into the Territories, and ultimately into all the States, had become a practical one. He believed in what Mr. Seward subsequently denominated "an irrepressible conflict." Some months prior to its announcement by Mr. Seward, in his famous speech at Rochester, Mr. Lincoln had given expression to this view, in the following forcible language:—

"It is now five years since a policy was instituted for the avowed object, and with a confident promise, of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, the agitation has constantly augmented. In my opinion, it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this Government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union will be dissolved; I do not expect the house to fall: but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate

extinction, or its advocates will push it forward until it becomes alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South."

Sooner, and in a different way from what either he or Mr. Seward had anticipated, the inevitable conflict came. It came in an announcement from the South, that the will of the people, fairly and constitutionally expressed, should no longer constitute the supreme law of the land. It came in threats of treason and rebellion. It came in the monstrous assertion, that slavery was the "bulwark of freedom," and should constitute "the corner-stone of the Government." It was soon written upon the page of history, in letters of fire and of blood. It plunged the country into a civil war of unequalled magnitude and unrelenting atrocity; and, in its last expiring gasp, it attempted the assassination of both its promulgators. The crisis was passed, the conflict ended, and the nation was for ever free.

Let us not lose sight of the fact, that this much-deprecated agitation of the question of slavery was, in the nature of the case, inevitable. The people of both sections of the country accepted it as a practical question, and joined on the issue of its extension. "Groping for some middle ground between the right and the wrong," Mr. Lincoln considered "as vain as the search for a man who should neither be a living man nor a dead man." The conflict could only be averted by a withdrawal of the demand on the one side, or a yielding to it on the other. There was no middle ground upon which to stand, except that of entire indifference. The South believed it right, and earnestly strove for its

recognition and extension. The North believed it to be a wrong, and could not, consistently with such a belief, be indifferent to its extension. Both parties appealed to the people. If both had abided by the result, the fiery ordeal through which we have passed would have been averted.

Such, in brief, were the leading political opinions entertained by Mr. Lincoln, when he was called to the highest office in the gift of his countrymen. He had had but little experience in public affairs. His public career was limited to a single term of service in the lower branch of the national Congress. In his own section of the country, however, he was not without reputation as a vigorous debater, a cogent reasoner, and a thoroughly honest and upright man. His famous debates with Mr. Douglas had given him a national reputation; and he had long before been esteemed as one of the most effective political speakers in the country. There are those in this assembly who will remember with pleasure a visit he once made to this town, and his address to its citizens upon the issues involved in an important presidential election. That he owed his nomination to the Presidency, in no small measure, to what is termed "availability," will be freely conceded; but this availability consisted chiefly in his known conservatism and his unquestioned integrity. On a comprehensive review of his administration, there are few, who — whatever opinions they may entertain upon particular measures — will not cheerfully concede to-day that no member of the party to which he belonged, either in public or private life, has exhibited, on the

whole, during the terrible struggle through which he has successfully led us, so just an appreciation of the great work to be accomplished, and the difficulties in the way of its successful fulfilment, so uniform and hopeful a confidence in ultimate success, such patience in adversity and such calmness in triumph, and such wise, cautious, and practical administrative abilities, as has Mr. Lincoln; while there are thousands of his countrymen who believe, that he was specially raised up by Divine Providence, for the accomplishment of the great work of the salvation of his country.

Mr. Lincoln entered upon the duties of his office, determined to avert, if possible, the impending catastrophe of civil war. He made every concession, short of an entire surrender of the principle upon which the people had passed, for the purpose of conciliation.

While Mr. Jefferson Davis was giving utterance to the following language, —

“The time for compromise is past; and we are now determined to maintain our position, and make all who oppose us smell Southern gunpowder and feel Southern steel,” —

Mr. Lincoln was urging, —

“In my view of the present aspect of affairs, there need be no bloodshed or war. I am not in favor of such a course; and I may say, in advance, that there will be no bloodshed unless it be forced upon the Government, and then it will be compelled to act in self-defence.”

This policy of conciliation thus foreshadowed, previous to his inauguration, was more fully developed

in his inaugural address. He disclaimed emphatically any purpose or wish to encroach upon any of the rights of the Southern people; he tells them, that, in those districts where opposition to his administration is so great as "to prevent competent resident citizens from holding the federal offices, there the offices shall remain unfilled;" he reminds them that the Constitution under which they have so long prospered remains still unchanged, and that nothing valuable can be lost by taking time; and he implores them to pause and deliberate, before precipitating the country into a civil war. He expresses the belief that "intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust, in the best way, all our present difficulties. . . .

"In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the Government, while I shall have the most solemn one 'to preserve, protect, and defend it.' I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break, our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

In this spirit, Mr. Lincoln entered upon the great

duties of his office. To a steadfast reliance upon Divine Providence, faith in republican institutions and in the integrity and patriotism of the people, faith in those principles of liberty upon which the Government was founded, and unqualified loyalty to the Constitution, President Lincoln added a combination of personal qualities which eminently fitted him for its successful discharge.

I need hardly refer to that straight-forward honesty which has so long been synonymous with his very name. It was well for us, that, at a crisis in our national affairs which called for the exercise of extraordinary powers, the confidence of the people in the integrity and uprightness of their chief magistrate was never shaken or impaired. As constitutional commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States, in a civil war of unparalleled magnitude, he wielded powers almost unlimited in their variety and extent. An executive patronage greater than that possessed by all his predecessors combined, was placed at his disposal. It were idle to deny, that treachery and frauds were often perpetrated against the Government by those professing to be its friends. With opportunities for their commission so innumerable, it could hardly have been otherwise. But, from the beginning to the close of the great struggle through which he led us, never so much even as a suspicion ever entered the mind of an honest man, that Mr. Lincoln was a gainer, directly or indirectly, to the extent of a single farthing, from the thousands of millions of dollars placed at his disposal; or that he ever made an appointment or adopted a measure

that he did not honestly believe would minister to the public good. When we consider the low standard of public morals which characterized the age in which he lived, his inflexible integrity, in itself, entitles our late President to a high position among the public men of the country.

President Lincoln was not more esteemed by his countrymen for his honesty of purpose and integrity of character, than for the discreet judgment and plain common sense which he so constantly exhibited in the administration of his office. He was indeed frequently accused by his political opponents, and at times by members of his own party, of indecision of purpose and slowness of action. He was, unquestionably, deliberate and cautious in arriving at a judgment, as well he might be, in view of the momentous responsibilities that depended upon his action. He was accustomed "to ponder well, and consider," before deciding upon important measures. He cheerfully entertained the various deputations who waited upon him, representing the different views and ideas that prevailed in the community, and would give to all a patient hearing. He would seek to shape his policy and guide his action in accordance with events, and not upon the mere theories of a purely speculative philosophy or an impatient and restless philanthropy. If he was at times slow in his movements, he was always sure. He seldom had occasion to retrace his steps. A policy once deliberately adopted was strenuously maintained, and successfully carried out. He seems to have possessed the happy faculty of discovering the right time in which to do the right thing.

Mr. Lincoln was at times censured for placing too little reliance upon his own individual judgment, and for yielding too readily to the advice of his political friends. We think a careful study of his public career will satisfy any fair-minded person of the utter groundlessness of such an opinion.

The issuing of his Proclamation of Emancipation, within a week after his conference with the deputation of Chicago clergymen, in which he had compared such a measure to the Pope's bull against the comet, has been most frequently urged in substantiation of this charge. It is at least a striking illustration of his ability to see both sides of a question, that his remarks on that occasion have always been regarded by the opponents of the measure as the strongest argument in their behalf that had ever been adduced.

Aside from the question of his constitutional right to issue such a proclamation, in the exercise of the power vested in him as Commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy, in time of actual war, and purely as a war measure, of which Mr. Lincoln never entertained a doubt, he presents in this conversation, in the clearest and strongest manner, every practical objection to this measure as a question of policy, which its warmest opponents had conceived.

But as bearing upon the question of his inconsistency or sudden change of opinion, in subsequently issuing the proclamation, it is sufficient to observe that he concludes this very conference with a remark, that he had stated these objections only to indicate the difficulties that had thus far prevented his action, and adds emphatically, —

“ I have not decided against a proclamation of liberty to the slaves, but hold the matter under advisement. I can assure you, the subject is on my mind more than any other. Whatever shall appear to be God’s will,” he adds in conclusion, indicating that devout reliance upon Divine aid, “ without which,” as he had stated at the outset of his career, “ he could not succeed, but with which success was certain,” — “ whatever shall appear to me to be God’s will, I will do.” And in that famous proclamation, the issuing of which I presume no one to-day regrets, which settled for ever the question of slavery in this land, paving the way for its abolition, by constitutional amendment, in those remaining States to which its terms were inapplicable, in language closely resembling that of the great Declaration of Independence, of which, indeed, it was the complete fulfilment, he says, —

“ Upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.”

It would seem as though Mr. Lincoln, in this practice of stating to those who were urging his hasty and immediate action, upon measures demanding the utmost deliberation, the strongest arguments *against* their adoption, had purposely in view the twofold object of defending that calm and judicious consideration he was wont to bestow upon all subjects dependent upon his action, and also of convincing the people, upon whose support he ultimately relied, that his final decision had not been taken, without a full and just appreciation of the various

objections that could be urged against it. A failure to appreciate this peculiarity, and to accept as his settled conviction of duty what was merely thrown out by way of objection or argument, has doubtless been the occasion of the opinion by many entertained of his instability and vacillation.

That he was not lacking in firmness, and reliance upon his own judgment, may be seen from an incident which occurred in one of the darkest hours of that critical period from which our country has just emerged. At a time when military disasters were following our armies in rapid succession, in our vain and apparently hopeless search for competent commanders, blame was extensively attached to his Cabinet advisers, and the clamor for a reconstruction of the Cabinet became loud and deep. An influential congressional Committee, embracing nearly every republican senator, waited upon the President to urge an immediate change. This request was seconded by the influence of the press of the country, and by the restless impatience of the people. It may be questioned whether so great a pressure was ever before brought to bear upon a public officer. And yet this President, who was regarded by so many at the time as deficient in requisite firmness, and too easily influenced by the wishes of his political friends, resolutely refused to make the desired change.

"What the country especially needs at this time," was his reply, "is victory in the field. A Cabinet of angels, if it were possible to procure one, could not give us this, without competent commanders of our forces." It is evidence of the wisdom of his decision,

that, when experience disclosed who the competent commanders were, military success everywhere attended our arms, while the Cabinet remained unchanged.

But whatever of hesitation or indecision he may at any time have manifested, in reference to measures which were advocated and opposed with equal sincerity of conviction by equally loyal men, he never for a moment lost sight of the great end, to the attainment of which all measures and policies were the mere instrumentalities, — the restoration of the Union, and the overthrow of the Rebellion. To this great work he devoted every energy of his nature. Neither the impulses of philanthropy, nor the persuasive entreaties of friends, could divert his attention from this paramount object of his administration. Especially was his action upon the subject of slavery uniformly regulated and controlled by this guiding principle of his career. Upon no subject is his record more clear and unmistakable than upon this. “My paramount object is to save the Union, and not either to save or destroy slavery. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear, because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less, whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause; and I shall do more, whenever I believe doing more will help the cause.”

While this principle ever controlled his official action, his conviction of the moral and political evils of the system was no less clearly proclaimed.

“If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and feel. But I

have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling." And, in one of his last allusions to this subject, he observes, "I aver, to this day, I have done no official act in mere deference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery."

The time has not yet arrived for judging fairly and impartially of the proper estimate to be placed upon the peculiar characteristics of Mr. Lincoln's mind. The rough side of his nature was so prominently exposed to our view, that it may be well questioned whether we have as yet done any thing like justice to the actual strength and power of his understanding. A careful perusal of his various speeches prior to his nomination for the Presidency, as well as of his numerous addresses and messages while in office, cannot fail to produce a conviction, that he is entitled to no mean rank among the public men of the country. Nowhere have the principles which he represented been stated with greater clearness, or sustained with greater power of reasoning; while his State-papers supply in strength and terseness whatever they may lack in polish or elegance. Unlike many of his day and generation, he never used language to *conceal* thought. Whatever opinions he may entertain, he is invariably clear and intelligible in their expression. As a debater, he was ever prompt and ready, of quick wit and irresistible humor, with a quaintness of illustration, an inexhaustible supply of anecdote, and a depth and seriousness of conviction, which never failed to gain for him a favorable hearing from opponent as well as friend.

But the qualities which most endeared Mr. Lincoln to his countrymen, and won for him the admiration of the world, were the singular equanimity of his disposition, and the extreme gentleness of his nature. Mr. Seward once said of him, that he was the best man he ever knew. It may indeed be questioned if he ever had a personal foe. Throughout his public career, he was neither despondent under adversity, nor elated by success. In the darkest hour of the nation's affliction, he was composed and hopeful. He discharged the duties of his great office with an unwavering faith in Divine Providence and an unfaltering belief in ultimate success. In spite of the defiant boasts of Southern leaders, the taunts of the foreign press, and the oft-repeated prophecies of political opponents, "that the war would never close under his administration," he lived to behold the surrender, upon terms of his own dictation, of the great army of the Rebellion, and the precipitate flight of its chosen leaders.

In the hour of triumph, he claimed no share of the nation's gratitude. He who had so often assumed the blame of others' short-comings, forgot to remember, that the substantial conditions of this final surrender, which had filled the heart of the nation with joy, had been penned by his own hand. To his friends who called to congratulate him on the great result, he says, —

"No part of the honor for the plan or execution is mine. To General Grant, his skilful officers, and brave men, it all belongs."

If any thing could add to the enormity of the crime that occasioned his death, it would be the fact, that,

while the final preparations for his assassination were being matured, he was diligently employed in devising schemes of amnesty and pardon for the participants in the Rebellion. At a cabinet meeting held on the last evening of his life, as we are officially informed, "he was cheerful and hopeful, and spoke kindly of General Lee, and others of the Confederacy."

The removal of such a man at such a time, and in such a manner, is one of those mysterious events in history that is wrapt in a darkness too impenetrable for human vision to fathom. While we may not presume to refer it, however remotely, to the agency of an all-righteous Providence, we may yet derive comfort in the assurance, that our beloved President was removed within the omniscient governance of that Being, "without whom not even a sparrow falleth to the ground."

Let us not too hastily deduce the moral of his death. Let us not, in our just indignation, read in it a lesson at variance alike with every principle of our religion, and with those qualities of his character which have especially endeared him to the memory of mankind.

Having been successfully borne through the fiery furnace of this protracted conflict, under the mild and Christian sway of our late chief magistrate, let us not, in our final triumph, initiate a harsh and vindictive policy towards a disarmed and helpless opponent.

While public justice may demand, that the more guilty instigators of rebellion, and those who in its prosecution have outraged every principle of civilized warfare, shall receive a punishment commensurate with their crime, let amnesty, reconciliation, and pardon be

freely offered our countrymen of the South. Thus, in our imitation of his character, we shall best illustrate our appreciation of his worth.

With the commemorative observances of this day, we conclude the varied series of affectionate tributes we have paid to his memory. We take leave of him at his honored grave.

“After life’s fitful fever, he sleeps well :
TREASON HAS DONE HIS WORST ; nor steel nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
Can touch him further.”

But the people in whose service he so faithfully labored, and in whose sacred cause he was so cruelly slain, will continue to cherish his memory, and to revere his name. Already have they accorded him a place in their affections, shared only by him who was “first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.”

For his successor in office, for his cabinet ministers, and for all others in authority, let us invoke “that Divine assistance without which they cannot succeed, but with which success is certain,” that they may have a right judgment in all things ; and that the blessings of unity, peace, and concord may be speedily restored to our beloved country.
